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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Brazil's Restless Students

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BRAZIL'S RESTLESS STUDENTS

At a time when student alienation and agitation is a world-wide phenomenon, it is hardly surprising that Brazilian students--who have a tradition of volatile protestation--should emulate their peers and take to the streets. Student grievances in Brazil, however, not only are more legitimate than in some countries, but also pose a long-range threat to the maintenance of stability.

A cycle of student provocation and police repression has been established and is likely to continue at least until the government makes some move to implement badly needed educational reforms. The students' repeated pleas for reform of the archaic educational system--better teachers, improved facilities, and updated curricula are high among their demands--have gone largely unheeded.

Until progress is evident, politically conscious students will remain easy prey for any agitator who exhorts them to demonstrate. By exploiting legitimate grievances, radical leftist student leaders hope to gain popular support for the students and then to convert this into widespread antigovernment sentiment capable of bringing down the administration. If the students are not permitted to become an acceptable pressure group within Brazilian society, they will almost surely feel justified in opposing the government by whatever means are open to them, including further violence.

Concurrently, potentially dangerous pressures are building up in the military--which is the key to the stability of the Costa e Silva government--for firmer action to halt agitation. The President's reluctance to act under pressure has virtually precluded his doing anything to satisfy either the students or the military. Continued inaction would be more likely to aggravate than alleviate the problem.

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Government Attitudes and Actions

Until it was declared illegal by the Castello Branco government in 1964, the dominant student organization in Brazil was the National Students' Union and its state counterparts. The Union was supported by the government until the revolution of April 1964 that ousted leftist president Joao Goulart. It was controlled by a united front of Communists and members of the radical student group, Popular Action.

The revolution weakened but did not completely destroy the effectiveness of these groups. In late 1964 the Castello Branco government realized that the tradition of left-wing student organizations would not die easily, and that in the absence of administration action, there would be little official control over student organization activities. In November 1964, Congress passed the so-called Suplicy Law, which established a new official student representation system headed by the National Students' Directorate. Student disenchantment with this law--which, for example, set controls on student activities as a requirement for continued financial support--prevented the effective functioning of the system.

In early 1967 the government amended the Suplicy Law and abolished all student organizations at national and state levels, permitting only those within the individual universities and faculties. The law bans student strikes and involvement in

outside political activity, and further declares illegal all secondary school organizations except athletic, civic, cultural, and social groups. The new version of the law has been no more successful than its predecessor in attracting student support, and because it failed to establish any new institutions, it has in effect created a vacuum in which extreme left-wing and radical groups have thrived.

The government has made only desultory efforts to fill this void. One student group, Decision, received some covert government backing, but as yet it has failed to produce anything approaching a national organization. A government-sponsored civic action program known as Project Rondon has sought to involve students in helping the poor, especially in rural areas. It has not yet involved many students, but progress has been encouraging and the program is being expanded.

Neither the Costa e Silva nor the Castello Branco administration has been able--or willing--to establish rapport with the students. Educational problems were not accorded a high priority in terms of national needs. In general, student political activity is regarded as subversive and student discontent is viewed as a police problem to be met by the mobilization of all available security forces. This attitude has facilitated the trend toward the left in student politics.

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25X1"The System"

The government--while admitting that some student grievances are indeed legitimate--has maintained that it cannot undo overnight the inequities that have been created through decades. In point of fact, however, although the total funds put into education have increased since 1964, the educational system's share of the national budget has decreased from more than 11 percent to little better than seven percent.

Secondary education traditionally has been carried out largely in tuition-charging private schools--a major hurdle for children from lower income families. The higher education system continues to bring together part-time students and professors in part-time universities. Brazilian universities are overcrowded, the curricula are outmoded, and instructors are often ill-qualified and so poorly

The President's Special Commission on Higher Education--chaired by General Meira Mattos, a widely respected military man but much distrusted by students--released a recent study pointing out numerous faults in the educational system. It recommended that the "whole structure undergo a complete reform." A second group, chaired by the education minister, has also submitted a study containing many valid recommendations, but some--such as instituting tuition charges--seem likely to irritate the students even further. Instead of implementing any of the commissions' recommendations, however, the government continues to "study" the problem.



President COSTA e SILVA



Education Minister TARSO DUTRA

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paid that they must hold more than one job. A principal problem is the catedratico system whereby professors hold life tenure in certain university chairs and thus constitute a powerful force opposing reform. Further, university facilities are usually widely scattered, making it difficult to establish the social and intellectual associations that tend to make for cohesiveness.

Broad-ranging education is virtually nonexistent. Students take only those courses offered within their own faculty, rarely branching out to attain a variety of interests. Many students study law, intending to enter politics or business, rather than undertaking the more demanding technical courses required in the much-needed fields of engineering, agriculture, or medicine. Little emphasis is placed on class attendance, and students often remain in school for years without graduating, creating a professional student class that is particularly inclined toward politics and agitation.

The Role of the Student

Brazilian students traditionally have exerted an influence in politics out of all proportion to their small numbers. This situation derives in large part from the prestige conferred by intellectual attainments and from the largely elite nature of the educational system. Further, participation in university politics has long been the proving ground for a successful political

career. It should be noted that although student activists generally hold left-wing views, the assumption of family responsibilities and an exposure to practical politics tend to moderate these ideas rapidly.

Although the majority of Brazilian students are apathetic and apolitical--only 10 to 20 percent ever participate in student politics--they share many attitudes with the activists. One is an inordinate faith in Brazil's "great destiny" and a deep disappointment in its present-day reality. They see around them the poverty and illiteracy of the masses, the undeveloped natural resources, and the inequality of opportunity. Few, however, are prepared to do anything about these ills, and most of those that are prefer protest marches and angry manifestos to dirtying their hands.

Students generally place part of the blame for Brazil's difficulties on the widespread corruption traditional in the government and on inefficient and mismanaged government institutions. Some may blame the inflexibility of Brazilian society while others accuse Communists and other radicals of vitiating development. For the majority, however, the most obvious scapegoat is foreign imperialism, which they believe extracts the country's wealth and conspires to prevent its accession to its rightful place as a "Great Power." Capitalism is blamed for most of the country's ills--for developing man's most base instincts and creating growing disparities between the rich and poor.

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Clearly the US is the most visible foreign power on the Brazilian scene, and as such it becomes the target of much student--as well as popular--wrath and indignation. The US is closely identified with unpopular programs of the revolution. An agreement between USAID and the Education Ministry has been particularly galling to the students. Even "democratic" Brazilian students state confidently such old canards as: the US Government is dominated by economic groups that control politics all over the world and that prevent the development of the people of the "third world"; the US initiated the planting of coffee in Africa in order to maintain Brazil in a colonial state; US involvement in Vietnam is outright aggression and is doomed to fail.

Student Organizations And Leaders

There are no effective national student organizations in Brazil except those that operate clandestinely. The legal central student directorates and faculty-level academic directorates are most often controlled by leftists, many of whom simultaneously hold office in the clandestine organization. Many are also members of one of the radical political movements.

There is a bewildering variety of splinter organizations that come to prominence and then fade out, depending primarily on the ability of their key leaders. Students--like the vast majority of Brazilians--have a tendency to support leaders rather than

ideas, which in part accounts for the disparities in student organizations from state to state and even from city to city. For example, leaders and organizations that may be prominent in Rio de Janeiro may well be almost unknown in Curitiba or Recife.

The illegal National Students' Union (UNE) remains the dominant student organization and probably commands at least the tacit support of most Brazilian students. Recently, however, it has suffered from divergencies among key leaders on questions of tactics and policy. The struggle at the national level appears to be between the militant Popular Action (AP) group headed by Luis Travassos, which won control of UNE at its last national congress, and a less radical group probably headed by Edson Soares and composed at least in part of those sympathetic to Communism.

The basic difference between the two groups appears more a matter of degree than of substance. AP militants are pushing to broaden protests to include national and international issues as well as legitimate educational complaints. Further, they want to reject outright any government offers to talk things over. The more moderate group prefers to restrict agitation to student problems and wants to accept the government's challenge--but only to "unmask" the administration's duplicity and the fact that it does not really intend to enact reforms. The thirtieth UNE congress is scheduled to be held clandestinely in the near future. Although it may end in

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Vladimir Palmeira

◀ Guanabara
Student Leader

President
UNE ▶



Luis Travassos

Anti-government and anti-US slogans
at Sao Paulo University



ORGANIZATION

KEY LEADERS

REMARKS

National Students'
Union (UNE) -
illegal

Luis Travassos Gonzaga de Rosa, president,
AP from Sao Paulo
Edson Soares, unofficial rival leader
Jose Carlos Mata Machado, vice president
AP from Minas Gerais
Luis Raul Dodsworth Machado, vice presi-
dent, AP from Guanabara

Militant line
Less radical line
Militant, son of a federal
deputy
Militant

State Students'
Union (UEE) -
illegal

Sao Paulo: Jose Dirceu Oliveira e Silva,
president, PCB sympathizer
Catarina Melloni, president, AP
Minas Gerais: Raimundo Mendes, AP
Parana: Stenio Jacob, president
Para: Roberto Fiuza, president, PCB

Rival presidents of split
Sao Paulo UEE. Dirceu is
less radical and probably
has more student support
Militant

Guanabara Metro-
politan Students'
Union (UME) -
illegal

Vladimir Gracindo Soares Palmeira, presi-
dent, dissident PCB but basically inde-
pendent of any party control
Marcos Antonio Medeiros

Son of progovernment senator
emerging as a key national
student leader
Prominent UME militant

Central Student
Directorates (DCE)
legal

Pernambuco: Abdias Vilar de Carvalho, pres-
ident of Federal University of Pernambuco
DCE
Carmen de Castro Chaves, vice
president
Ceara: Jose Genuino Neto, president, Federal
University of Ceara DCE
Minas Gerais: Athos Magno da Costa e Silva,
president Federal University of Minas
Gerais DCE
Brasilia: Honestino Monteiro Guimaraes,
president University of Brasilia DCE AP?
Guanabara: Carlos Muniz, president Federal
University of Rio de Janeiro DCE
Rio Grande do Sul: Jose Prado, president
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
DCE-Livre

Probable UNE leaders in
Pernambuco

UNE backer, less radical line

Also president of illegal DCE
counterpart

Trying to recapture leadership
of legal DCE

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the establishment of two rival organizations, it is also possible that one side or the other will bow to the group with the most student backing.

This same split between radicals and extreme radicals also exists in at least some of UNE's subordinate state organizations. The Sao Paulo group has been split for some months. There are two presidents and two separate state organizations that manage to cooperate on certain issues, but waste much time and energy fighting each other instead of the government.

In addition to the legal and illegal student organizations, there are also political movements or parties that have student wings. Brazil's major political parties have never had vigorous student sections to provide a legal, open outlet for youthful political enthusiasms. In the case of the AP, however, students make up the great majority of the total membership. They also constitute substantial parts of two smaller groups, the Revolutionary Organization of Marxist Political Workers and the Revolutionary Workers' Party/Trotskyite.

The Militant Popular Action Group

The AP is one of the most radical and certainly the most controversial of the student-oriented political groups. It was created in the early 1960s when some activists in the Catholic University Youth and the Catholic Student Youth groups

broke away to participate actively in political and social reform movements. Young Catholic activists had been gradually moving further left since the mid-1950s, and their views consistently came into conflict with the conservative-moderate views of much of the church hierarchy. Although the AP's originally held views were fairly typical of Catholic action groups, its clandestine nature and cell-type organization promoted a growing radicalism.

From its formation until the 1964 revolution, the AP controlled the UNE through a united front coalition with the Communists. It used this platform to advantage and grew rapidly until the revolution. Despite government efforts to destroy the AP, it has retained its hold on UNE and, until the recent schism, appeared to be thriving. There is evidence to suggest, however, that the AP at least in some states may be beginning to disintegrate. Dissension and defections have occurred in such key states as Minas Gerais and Sao Paulo, and in Guanabara it has been virtually moribund since a police sweep in 1967 netted most of the top-level state leaders.

Not a great deal is known about the AP. It is headed by a national command of five deliberately obscure figures chosen by the AP's national congress and empowered with full executive authority. There are ten regional commands, some of which are divided into zones. Internally, the AP is organized into

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base cells made up of three to five members, base nuclei made up of three to five cells, and base assemblies made up of all nuclei members. This pyramidal arrangement continues through sections and section assemblies to the zone level. Much of this organization may exist only on paper, and certainly such sophistication has not developed in many areas.

The AP's total membership is not known, but it is probably something less than 1,000. The source of its finances is another murky issue. At least some funds come from portions of the Catholic Church--particularly the Dominican Order, which has long had a special relationship with the AP. Some funds also come from Christian Democrats in other countries, especially in Western Europe. Probably the majority of the money comes from the AP's own members and sympathizers.

It should be noted that it does not take a great deal of money to conduct most student affairs. Part of the fun of any demonstration comes from stealing sign-making materials and covertly using the university's own mimeograph machines to print manifestos. Money for travel can often be borrowed from parents or friends--or even from politicians currying student support.

Communist Involvement in the Student Movement

Even if the AP's influence indeed is waning, student militance is growing. Other groups

are no doubt benefiting from AP defections, but no clear trend has yet been established. Marxism in its many hues has traditionally appealed to Brazilian intellectuals. It is not surprising that many educators and students are influenced by its tenets and are easily led into supporting Communist causes. It is not likely that many students actually join the party, but many are willing to follow the Communist ideological lead and will end by giving at least tacit support to one or another of the Communist factions.

The Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) has long made a special effort to attract student members. Despite the recent splits that have racked the party, it has continued these efforts and its leaders are reported to be much encouraged by their success in attracting new members as a result of student demonstrations. The party has reactivated the Communist Youth Union that was abolished in 1958. Party leaders hope that this will not only attract younger members but will also provide preliminary indoctrination for young militants who until now have been taken directly into the party without benefit of an apprenticeship, and who afterward have become dissatisfied.

In general, the Communists have chosen to work through regular student organizations. Though few in numbers, they have been able to dominate student policy through the use of classic Communist parliamentary maneuvers,

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by their militancy and superior organization, and because many Brazilian students are inclined toward Marxism and disillusioned with democracy as they see it practiced. The PCB is attempting to exert greater influence over student rallies and demonstrations, not only because it fears violence will lead to more violence, but also because it believes the party must be "where the action is."

The PCB also sends students to the Soviet Union and to other Eastern European Communist countries for academic as well as political training. There are probably about 350 Brazilian students studying in the bloc--perhaps 180 in the USSR and the others in groups no larger than about 20 in other Eastern European countries. Few of the students on scholarships in Communist countries appear to be Communists themselves; rather, most of them are simply taking advantage of an opportunity to gain a higher education and probably very few of them could have gained admission to Brazilian universities. The PCB's Youth Commission--despite plaintive remarks about the lack of money and political support it receives--devoted considerable effort to arranging for a large Brazilian delegation at the recent Ninth World Youth Festival in Bulgaria.

As a result of splits within the PCB, several new Communist-oriented splinter parties have developed. In 1962, a group of young militants who favored Chinese-type violent revolution

broke away and formed the Communist Party of Brazil. This group has had little success in recruiting volunteers, but some of its members may be active among radical students, particularly with secondary students in Sao Paulo.

Late in 1967 another, larger group of dissidents led by Sao Paulo Secretary General Carlos Marighella broke away from the PCB because of the party's insistence on peaceful revolutionary methods. It is not clear how many party members and sympathizers actually went with Marighella and his group, but the PCB is still having trouble reorganizing in such key states as Sao Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. Marighella has opposed adopting any formal name for his group and strongly prefers that no organizational structure or bureaucracy be formed. He reportedly hopes to organize rural guerrilla groups and does not appear to be giving priority to forming student cadres.

The Marighella group itself did not remain united for long. One sector, probably led by Mario Alves de Souza Vieira, has formed a movement known as the Revolutionary Brazilian Communist Party (PCBR) which is reported to have had some success in attracting former AP members in Guanabara. They admire the PCBR's emphasis on the primacy of the working class and its advocacy of violently revolutionary methods. The PCBR may be responsible for at least some of the recent incidents of urban terrorism, and its philosophy

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Body of student
at Guanabara State Assembly



Students rioting
in Rio de Janeiro



Cavalry attacks students
on Rio church steps

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seems likely to attract some of the most militant activists among the students.

Yet another of the dissident Communist groups is the Communist Workers' Party. It is reported to be made up of radical leftist students, PCB dissidents from Rio Grande do Sul, and some members of the small, radical political party, the Revolutionary Organization of Marxist Political Workers (POLOP). In addition, it has at least some contact with Marighella. POLOP and another small political movement, the Revolutionary Workers' Party/Trotskyite, also share the Marxist philosophy. They have been very active with students, especially in Rio de Janeiro where they have furnished leadership for some of the recent student demonstrations.

Another splinter group active in Rio de Janeiro is the United Front of Calabouco Students, which takes its name from the Calabouco restaurant closed by the government in late March. Students who had gathered to protest the planned closing were dispersed by police, who shot and killed student Edson Souto. Violent demonstrations against this action lasted more than a week and have recurred spasmodically ever since. The Front has produced at least one important student leader, Elinor Mendes de Brito, and is continuing its efforts to broaden its support.

Backing for the Students

Although very little is known about the organization,

financing, or membership of most of the groups, it is clear that their respective fortunes are tied in large measure to the continuance of student agitation.

Confronted with this amorphous array, security forces have had little success in monitoring--let alone curtailing--student activities. Only a substantial show of force has prevented demonstrations, and even then harassing "lightning" demonstrations continue. Officials are frustrated by their frequent inability to apprehend key student leaders, who usually operate with protecting goon squads. The police have had some successes, however, notably the recent arrest of Guanabara student leader Vladimir Palmeira, which has at least temporarily hampered effective student action in Rio. In the main, police forces eventually give up and simply beat or arrest any student or bystander upon whom they can lay hands.

Although the security forces' willingness to resort to indiscriminate violence is perhaps understandable, such repression has led to charges of police brutality and has been responsible for an increase in public support for the students' legitimate demands. The spontaneous, student-oriented demonstrations of early April, however, have given way to well-organized anti-government protests. Radicals realize that the student body can be galvanized into a potent antiadministration weapon. They can maneuver, if not completely control, students and are able

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to turn a protest against police excesses into a demonstration against "dictatorship" or foreign capital.

Undisciplined secondary students add to the confusion, particularly since they appear to operate outside the effective control of any organization, including the illegal Brazilian Secondary Students' Union. They often turn out in large numbers at demonstrations, and their emotional, daring participation is no doubt nearly as frustrating to university student leaders bent on maintaining control as it is to security forces.

Vitally important support also has been forthcoming from some of the Catholic clergy. Priests, with the consent of the hierarchy, have participated in some demonstrations, and leading church figures have issued manifestos backing the students against the government. Such diverse leaders as the controversial archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Dom Helder Camara, the moderate auxiliary bishop of Rio de Janeiro, Dom Jose Castro Pinto, and the conservative cardinal of Rio, Dom Jaime de Barros Camara, have given their blessings to the students' legitimate, nonpolitical demands. Dom Helder has been particularly clear in stating his belief that students necessarily will be part of social reform in Brazil and that, therefore, the church must maintain and build its ties with them. While more moderate churchmen have refrained from clear-cut encouragement for the students--and even Dom Helder

has tried to discourage radicals--all but the most conservative have at least tacitly approved their cause.

The church's new-found enthusiasm for social and educational reform has, however, deepened the suspicion with which it is viewed by many "hard-line" military men, some of whom regard the church as a most active force for subversion in Brazil. The growing coincidence of student-church interests seems likely to add to the already simmering tension between the church and the Costa e Silva government.

Student leaders have also sought to attract support from labor leaders. Some unions have issued manifestos of support and some workers have participated in student demonstrations. In general, however, workers have shied away from too close association with the students. In part, this is because of traditional worker suspicions of "rich men's sons" who merely wish to exploit the workers' grievances for their own ends. It also stems from fear of government repression and from resentment of radical student disruption of legitimate worker protests. These factors work against a meaningful worker-student alliance. Should they be overcome, the government would face real trouble.

Opposition politicians have tried to capitalize on student demands, but so far none has gained reciprocal student support. The views of such traditional

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figures as former president Juscelino Kubitschek and outspoken Carlos Lacerda are regarded as either outmoded or opportunistic. A mass student movement behind any presently prominent politician seems unlikely.

Prospects

Student demonstrations by themselves, no matter how well organized and widespread they may be, are not going to bring down the government. They may, however, cause divisions within the military on the handling of the continuing turmoil. Military dissatisfaction with the inept performance of President Costa e Silva and some of his key ministers is likely to increase proportionately to the number of disturbances that take place.

The President's failure to understand the forces at work is clear from his repeated attribution of the disorders solely to professional agitators, profiteers, opposition politicians,

and persons whose rights were canceled after the 1964 revolution. He has frequently expressed his belief that there is a "vast, subversive plot" to undermine his government, but fails to attribute any of the problems to his administration's neglect, apathy, or ineptitude.

Costa e Silva apparently is undecided as to what course to follow. He has avoided imposing a state of siege, fearing that it would force him to take one authoritarian step after another, but has reportedly agreed to declare one if further student demonstrations occur in defiance of his recently imposed ban. Demonstrations have since taken place in several key cities, but their peaceful nature or rapid disintegration has prevented a major clash and enabled the President to exercise restraint. Mounting student and military frustration with government inaction, however, does not bode well for even short-range stability in Brazil.

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